



# Harper's BAZAAR INDIA

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JULY-AUGUST 2017, ₹200

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THE  
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MOTHERS  
& DAUGHTERS  
A LOVE  
LETTER

# A CLASS ACT

WOMEN WHO MAKE THEIR OWN RULES



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HARPER'S BAZAAR INDIA  
JULY-AUGUST 2017

Bazaar **ESCAPE**

# JEWEL IN THE MOUNTAINS

*The Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort makes the fascinating Al Hajar ranges in Oman irresistible*  
By Kalyani Prasher



A table set on a cliff overlooking beautiful views of the canyon

**T**hey call it Diana Point, after Lady Diana, who came here in 1986 and stood at the very place I am standing right now, in awe of the view. The grand canyon of the Middle East is spread out in front of me, wide and deep and mysterious, with 360 degree views of the Al Hajar Mountains that form the backdrop. Tiny clusters of cream coloured houses hang from the cliffs here and there—it seems impossible that anyone lives in these small villages, so high up and disconnected from the world. And yet, as the sun goes down, lights come on, twinkling from afar, signalling life. When Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar opened last fall, Diana Point became part of its Italian restaurant Bella Vista (translating to ‘beautiful view’), a place you can sit outdoors, get a drink, watch the sun set, and wonder if Diana was equally surprised at the beauty of this country. There’s the pretty Al Maisan, which serves world cuisine, where I eat breakfast everyday. There’s also the exotic Al Qalaa for Arabic grills with a stunning Moroccan-style lounge upstairs. You can use the Dining by Design service for special occasions where they’ll set

up a pretty table at surprising locations. However, Bella Vista remained my favourite for the stunning view.

There are many things about Oman that surprise you, but the biggest shock is the lack of people. As we drove out of Muscat in the middle of the day, there were a total of three cars on the road, the smooth as butter highway running along desert landscape, going into the rocky Al Hajar Mountains towards Jabal al Akhdar, or the Green Mountain. If you want a romantic break, you can’t ask for more—stark mountains, no people, a stainless, endless blue sky, and a nip in the air. As you drive up the Green Mountain, it keeps getting better.

Located 2,000 mts up into the mountains, along the rim of the grand canyon, the Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort is designed to extract maximum benefit of the astonishingly gorgeous views. The biggest luxury here is the location, and with infinity pools along the edges of the rim, an open and spacious layout, natural beauty is available on call, 24/7. The design itself reflects the ramparts of an Omani fort, complete with a tower atop which is a star gazing platform. Luxury is also in the details: Hand-cut Moroccan tiles in the hammam,

local artists displayed throughout the hotel, different lamps and artefacts in Omani designs that you want to buy immediately, Amouage toiletries in the room—not everything is in your face but every little thing is thoughtfully placed.

At the spa, the luxury continues, as I make use of the Himalayan Salt Steam Room, and then go for an hour's blissful massage with rose oil. The hammam is where one could soak in the goodness for a full two hours but I wanted to spend some time enjoying my large private space. My villa came with a private infinity pool (one of 42 pools in the resort of 115 rooms) with a view of the canyon and the mountains. An open shower, day beds, mild winter afternoons, and the temperature-controlled pool ensured I hardly went inside, often spending hours just staring at the beauty in front of me, looking out at the gap in the mountain range, where you could see all the way down to Nizwa, an hour away from Jabal al Akhdar.

Nizwa is somewhere I did go and recommend highly. The location of a grand old fort and a souq, it makes for a great half-day trip from the resort. The intention was to see the fort and shop but I made the mistake of entering the souq first. What not to buy? You can lose yourself inside this maze of stores full of fabulous antique Omani jewellery, art and artefacts, lamps,



A pool overlooking a cliff



The bedroom of a cliff facing villa

*At night, all one has to do for entertainment is look up—the sky is so filled with stars, layers upon layers of them, that you can spend hours looking at the patterns*

*khanjars*, teapots, and the famous dry fruit from the region. Everything is simply beautiful. (Make sure you ask if the jewellery you like is from Oman because a lot of it comes from Dubai and Morocco too.) With pieces ranging from ₹5,000 to beyond ₹50,000, there are exquisite necklaces in muted silver

and semi-precious gems, earrings and rings in various styles and sizes. It was impossible to stop wanting all of them.

At night at the resort, all one has to do for entertainment is look up—the sky is so filled with stars, layers upon layers of them, that you can spend hours looking at the patterns, identifying constellations, thanking your stars that you can see them, and indeed the clear skies in the day. No amount of money can buy a clean, blue sky—and that was another luxury at Jabal al Akhdar.

For dinner, I had a delicious *mezze* and Omani grill platter comprised of lamb,

beef, and chicken kebabs with rice and dips. The next morning, I decided to exercise a bit. You can do the via ferrata (cliff-edge walking) adventure within the resort, where you get into a harness and walk along the rim of the hill the hotel is located on, or you can drive out and walk in the mountains, exploring the little villages. Most of the villages are uninhabited and the walk is not for the faint hearted—you climb down steep stones and walk on dainty parapets—but the views from this side of the mountain are something else. I stood in the middle of the walk, breathless and tired, and looked up and saw a sky painted with fluffy white clouds... I looked down and saw roads snaking up and down through the Green Mountain, as if someone had sketched them by hand to make it all look pretty. I thought then that the effort of the walk was worth it. I thought of my infinity pool, the warm hammam, the luxury that awaited me back at the resort... and I smiled and carried on. ■

[www.jabal-akhdar.anantara.com](http://www.jabal-akhdar.anantara.com)



Star gazing at the resort